



OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
(MILITARY COMMUNITY AND FAMILY POLICY)

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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

DoD-State Liaison Office

March 18, 2013

The Honorable Jean Price
Montana State House
State Capitol Building
Helena, Montana

Dear Representative Price:

I am writing to you in regards to the committee hearing on SB203, concerning the *Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children*. I wanted to thank you for helping us with this issue over the last two years, your attentiveness and concern has been much appreciated. I will not be available to attend the hearing and wish to submit the following as testimony describing the importance of this issue to the military community.

Department of Defense (DoD) 2007, in conjunction with the Council of State Governments, worked with groups and individuals representing legislators, educators, and educational organizations and associations over a period of two years to create the *Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children*.

The *Interstate Compact* is an agreement among member states to a set of practices that will allow for the uniform treatment of military children transferring between school districts and between states. The compact does not ask for special privileges for military children. It DOES ask that states create a level playing field for their scholastic achievement. The compact provides a forum to discuss concerns affecting military children that have not existed before and then set consistent guidelines. The language and intent of the Compact will provide consistency for our military children as they move from state to state and alleviate some of the unneeded hardships they encounter.

The reason this compact is needed, and why military children have unique challenges is because of the frequent moves between states and sometimes from overseas. On average, most military children will move at least twice during their high school years, and most will attend six to nine different school systems between kindergarten and 12th grade. These frequent moves result in some educational obstacles. Though many states, including Montana, have made progress in addressing these educational concerns, there is a lack of consistency *between* states that continues to create difficulties for our military families. Examples of these recurring issues include kindergarten start age, participation in extracurricular activities, timely transfer of records, placement in appropriate courses, missed or redundant entrance and exit testing, support for children of deployed service members, and on-time graduation. Though one state may do several things right, a move to another state can create a new set of problems since the procedures are not consistent.

Montana is home to over 1700 active duty military children and an additional 3230 school age children of the National Guard and Reserve. DoD recognizes that military families work, go to school and live outside the installation gates. So they are impacted by the laws and policies of the state in which they reside. DoD also wants to retain their experienced, voluntary armed forces. To retain servicemembers we have to retain the families. Our hope is that this compact will help make the academic transition for military children appear seamless as they move from one military community to the next... Thank you in advance for your time and interest in making a difference in the lives of our military families.

Sincerely,

Jacline L. Harriman
Western Region State Liaison